

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Yamashiro Historic District  
 other names/site number Bernheimer Villa and Oriental Gardens

## 2. Location

street & number 1999 North Sycamore Avenue

N/A
N/A

 not for publication  
 city or town Los Angeles vicinity  
 state California code CA county Los Angeles code 037 zip code 90068

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,  
 I hereby certify that this \_\_\_ nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.  
 In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:  
 \_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide \_\_\_ local

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature of commenting official Date  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:  
 \_\_\_ entered in the National Register \_\_\_ determined eligible for the National Register  
 \_\_\_ determined not eligible for the National Register \_\_\_ removed from the National Register  
 \_\_\_ other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only **one** box.)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
5		buildings
1		sites
3		structures
		objects
<b>9</b>		<b>Total</b>

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling: mansion  
SOCIAL/clubhouse  
LANDSCAPE/ garden  
   
   
   
 

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE/restaurant  
DOMESTIC/hotel  
DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling: apartment building  
   
   
 

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS/Asian  
   
   
 

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Concrete  
walls: Wood and stucco  
roof: Metal tile  
other:

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## 7. Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

### Summary Paragraph

Yamashiro (Japanese for “Castle on the Hill”), also known as the Bernheimer Villa and Oriental Gardens, was the vision of the brothers Adolph and Eugene Bernheimer, German-born cotton barons and avid Asian Art collectors.<sup>1</sup> The Bernheimers purchased seven acres of hillside property in the heart of Hollywood for the construction of an expansive estate and gardens. It is composed of twenty-seven lots on Whitley Hill, which the Bernheimers purchased in 1913 from prominent developer Hobart J. Whitley, who is known as the “Father of Hollywood.” The property overlooks the sprawling former Rollins Estate (now the Magic Castle), a Chateausque villa completed in 1909, with views of Hollywood Boulevard further south.<sup>2</sup> The Bernheimers hired New York architect Franklin M. Small, with local architect Walter Webber serving as supervising architect, to design the Main House (villa) at the center of the estate to house their extensive collection of Asian art. The Main House was completed in 1914, and the estimated cost was \$120,000 to \$250,000.<sup>3</sup> It is a prominent example of orientalism as applied to architecture, exhibiting eclectic Asian influences. The design is based on seventeenth-century Japanese architectural traditions. The gardens are an integral part of the estate, and were laid out by Adolph Bernheimer and landscaper Andreas C. Orum. The gardens feature the original concentric terrace design, and retain many original features including concrete stairways and retaining walls, decorative features, water courses, and original plants and other landscaping. The Yamashiro Historic District is composed of nine contributing buildings, sites, and structures on the estate property. The terraced gardens are a contributing site with three contributing garden structures: the South Gatehouse, Resting Pavilion, and Japanese Pagoda; there are five contributing buildings: the Main House, Garage, Groundskeeper’s Cottage, Menagerie House, and the Hollywood Hills Hotel complex. The eastern portion of the garden was altered to accommodate the Hotel, and the Main House was adapted for use as a restaurant in the 1950s. In the 1980s the remaining tea house was demolished after a fire. Despite these alterations, Yamashiro continues to convey the original vision of the Bernheimer Brothers and Franklin Small, and the property overall retains integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, association, setting, and feeling.

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### Narrative Description

#### Contributing Buildings

##### 1. Main House (villa)

The Main House (villa) is two stories in height, and square in plan around a central courtyard which measures 40 feet square. Each wing is 116 feet long. The foundation is reinforced concrete, and the structure is wood frame composed of cedar and other native California woods. The exterior is clad in Japanese-inspired half-timbering and smooth, white stucco. Exterior decorative features include stamped metal plaques and wood carvings. The main entrance is on the south façade and is approached by concrete stairs clad in tile (a small lift has been placed to the east side to facilitate access). The double front doors are original, although the original decorative panels in the lower half have been removed and replaced with glass panels. The primary (south) façade has eight heavy wood pilasters with stamped metal capitals. Originally a raised terrace surrounded the building; the terrace has been replaced by glass-enclosed verandahs on the south, west, and east façades. The north wing of the building has been altered to accommodate kitchen and other service uses, and the original hipped roof has been replaced with a flat roof.

The primary portion of the roof is a hipped roof clad in metal tiles (now painted silver). The hipped roof has substantial ridge beams and projecting, swept or flying eaves. The ridge beams are decorated with rosettes and terminate in

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<sup>1</sup> The property was called Yamashiro as early as 1914. “Palatial Home is Finished,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 15, 1914.

<sup>2</sup> The former Rollins Estate (now the Magic Castle) was constructed in 1909. It was built for banker and real estate magnate Rollin B. Lane. The Lane family left Hollywood in the 1940s and the estate was converted for multi-family housing. In 1960, property-owner Thomas O. Glover, who also owned Yamashiro at that time, was approached by renowned magician William W. Larsen, Sr. about the possibility of using the property as a private club for magicians. In 1963, the Rollins Estate officially opened as the Magic Castle; it continues to house the Academy of Magical Arts, Inc. today.

<sup>3</sup> In a *Los Angeles Times* article on January 11, 1914 the cost was reported as \$120,000; a follow-up article on November 15, 1914 included an estimated total cost of \$250,000.

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acroterion in the form of traditional Japanese *kaerumata*, or “frog’s leg” brackets carved with flowers. There are decorative, Japanese-inspired brackets beneath the projecting eaves which are capped with stamped metal caps and plaques. Above the main entrance and the two flanking window boxes (which are now enclosed in the verandahs) are distinctive cusped gables.

The east and west façades are divided into a near symmetrical composition consisting of seven bays divided by wooden pilasters crowned with large ornamental brackets. The entrances consist of double doors with elaborate door surrounds flanked by two small windows. There are four gablet roofs, two facing north, and one each facing east and west. The east and west gablets are crowned with two *shachihoko*, mythical animals with the head of a tiger and the body of a carp. It was believed that the *shachihoko* could cause rainfall, so they are often found on castles and temples as a way to protect against fire.

Fenestration originally consisted of double-hung wood sash windows. There are four large window openings on the east and west façades, symmetrically arranged between the pilasters. On the first floor most of the glazing has been removed so that the interior is open to the verandahs.<sup>4</sup> The windows flanking the front entrance retain the original, traditional, Japanese-inspired screens. Fenestration on the second story was added following World War II, when the building housed boarding students.

On the interior, the primary, public spaces face south, west, and east, with the kitchen and other service areas to the north. Sets of French doors, folding doors, and sliding screens provide access from the ground floor rooms to a viewing terrace, which overlooks a sunken garden and koi pond. The north end of the courtyard is dominated by a large recessed open-air room, which formerly served as a ceremonial audience chamber. This space originally included screen enclosures, but is now open.

The second story currently serves as offices and storage space, and at one time held small bedrooms. This area is largely utilitarian in nature and did not contain significant interior features. The basement has a wide concrete corridor which mirrors the footprint of the original house. Off of this corridor are storage vaults and utility areas. There is a space in the basement that appears to have been used as a speakeasy during Prohibition.

Despite some alterations to accommodate the conversion of the Main House for use as a restaurant, it retains important exterior character-defining features on both the exterior and interior, and continues to convey its historic significance. Exterior character-defining features include the wall cladding, roof configuration with flying eaves, fenestration pattern on the first floor, original doors, window boxes, pilasters, stamped metal plaques and caps, decorative brackets, and other decorative details. Much of the interior plan and design has been altered for restaurant use; however, the strong Asian aesthetic remains. Interior character-defining features include delicate wood fretwork, coffered ceilings, moldings, doors, metalwork and carving. The main entrance hall is the most intact of the interior spaces, preserving the central axis of the house and its views of the interior gardens.

## 2. Garage

The Garage is located behind the Main House on the north side of the property, on axis with the house and the former north gateway.<sup>5</sup> The Garage features similar design characteristics to the Main House, although with fewer decorative details. It is two stories in height, square in plan, with wood frame construction. The exterior is clad in Japanese-inspired half-timbering and smooth, white stucco. The main body of the roof is hipped with flying eaves; gablet roofs are on each of the four sides. The gablets are decorated with stamped metal plaques on the bargeboards and surmounted by *kaerumata* acroterions. The gablets on the north and south façades are larger than those on the east and west, and do not have raised ridge crests.

The east and west façades were originally dominated by double sliding garage doors, paneled on the bottom with windows on the top; the doors on the east façade remain intact. The large doors allowed for carriages or vehicles to enter from either side and pass through the building, as there was no central partition. Fenestration on the second story of the east and west façades consists of three windows in the gable ends; the center window is a casement. The north and south façades are symmetrically divided into two bays each. Fenestration on the first floor consists of pairs of double-hung windows; on the second floor in the gable ends are two double-hung windows flanked by two fixed windows.

<sup>4</sup> The original windows have been retained and are in storage.

<sup>5</sup> The north gateway was damaged by a delivery truck in 2010 and has been removed and placed in storage pending repair.

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The interior of the Garage has been converted for use as office space.

### 3. Groundskeeper's Cottage

The Groundskeeper's Cottage is nestled in the side of the hill on the northwest part of the property, at a lower elevation than the Main House. It is generally utilitarian in design, with minimal Asian-inspired decorative details. The cottage is L-shaped in plan, and sits on a raised concrete foundation. The east and south façades are cut into the hillside and act as retaining walls. The building is wood frame construction, with narrow wood clapboard exterior wall cladding. The roof is composed of two hipped roofs joined to cover the L-shaped structure. The roof has flying eaves reflecting the design of the main house, and five gables. In one of the gables is a hanging decorative element in the shape of a spade. The original wood shingles on the roof have been replaced with composition tiles.

There is a paneled wood garage door and an entrance to a basement flat in the north façade. Above the garage level, the north façade is set back to create a narrow terrace. There are three French doors in the center of the north façade, flanked by two pairs of double-hung, wood sash windows. Fenestration on the other façades consists of double-hung wood windows in various sizes. The eastern portion of the south façade is obscured by the hillside; the western portion has at least two entrances, large windows, and a patio. The Groundskeeper's Cottage has been divided into two residential units and is occupied by tenants. To the south of the cottage is the original incinerator with a metal roof and chimney, no longer in use.

### 4. Menagerie House

The Menagerie House appears to have been constructed in the 1920s. It is located to the southeast of the Main House, beneath the Pagoda. It is one-story in height, and designed in the Storybook style. The Menagerie House is wood frame construction, with textured stucco exterior wall cladding. The original roof was wood shingle with rolled eaves; the roof is now covered in bitumen roofing felt with no overlay and houses mechanical equipment. The original rough masonry chimney remains intact. The main entrance is shaded by a small, gabled canopy that is supported by decorative brackets, and surrounded by rough rock masonry covered in vines. It originally consisted of one to two rooms and a large screened cage to house monkeys and other small animals. The cottage has been enlarged over time and now consists of four rooms, and the cage has been removed. The north wall of the living room is the rough rock retaining wall, which was the backdrop of the original cage. The interior of the living room retains the original rustic piled rock fireplace, sleeping loft, and wood beams. Although the Menagerie House has been altered over time, it retains numerous character-defining features. It is currently used as a single residence.

### 5. Hollywood Hills Hotel complex

The Hollywood Hills Hotel complex is on the east side of the property. It was constructed in the early 1950s and is the latest construction on the site. The Hollywood Hills Hotel replaced the east gardens and a small tea house, although the original *torii* gate which functioned as the entrance to the tea house has been relocated to the entrance of the pool area. The hotel is composed of four buildings with small individual units with balconies. No architect is associated with their design. The complex displays a Mid-century Modern architectural aesthetic with modular concrete, frame and stucco construction with references to Japanese design in the railings, balconies and interiors which had sliding shoji screens as room dividers. There have been some alterations to the hotel property, but it retains significant character-defining features. It still operates as a hotel with some residential rental units.

## **Contributing Site**

### 1. Gardens

The seven-acre site is dominated by a landscaped Japanese garden, which retains original plant species imported from Japan and a number of garden structures. The gardens were laid out by Adolph Bernheimer and Andreas C. Orum, the Bernheimers' landscaper. The gardens are terraced in concentric circles down the hill, which are defined by masonry and concrete retaining walls. The original garden design included tea houses, pavilions, aviaries, a miniature village (seen in the historic photograph on continuation sheet AD-13), and a pagoda shipped from Japan. A series of water courses, lakes, and waterfalls added to the lavishness of the garden in the semi-arid environment of Southern California. The garden immediately south of the Main House below the first terrace remains intact. The original concrete staircase leads from the terrace to the entrance of the Japanese garden which retains topiaries, bonsai trees, Korean grass, Japanese

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pinetrees, and creeping cypress. The original winding water course and ponds are extant and operational. Other intact features include concrete border decorations, walls, and terraces on the south side of the property, as well as the remains of a secondary water course which used to flow into a large pond in front of the pagoda, now replaced with the hotel's swimming pool. Additional original garden features remain on the east side of the hill.

### ***Contributing Structures***

#### 1. South Gatehouse

The South Gatehouse serves as the main entrance to the hilltop compound and accentuates the visual access between the Main House, the former Rollins Estate (now the Magic Castle), and Franklin Boulevard below. The South Gatehouse sits approximately fifty feet above Sycamore Avenue, and a double flight of stairs leads from the street up the retaining wall to the long flight of poured concrete stairs that lead to the south gate. The South Gatehouse is composed of a central pavilion flanked by two smaller structures; the three components are connected by two non-load-bearing walls. It is wood frame construction with decorative half-timbering and smooth stucco on a concrete foundation. The central pavilion is two stories in height, and the bottom portions of the exterior walls are flared. The north and south ends of the central pavilion are open, as is the attic which allows views of the rafters and attic screens. It has a hipped roof clad in metal tiles, with wide projecting eaves with exposed rafters and purlins. The central pavilion has decorative ridge caps, and brackets or *kaerumata* beneath the top plates and collar beams. The flanking pavilions are small boxes with no windows or doors, and appear to be solely decorative. They have gabled roofs with wide projecting flying eaves with exposed rafters and purlins. The gable ends have permeable wooden screens. The walls connecting the three structures are capped with a roof with wide eaves.

#### 2. Resting Pavilion

Moving approximately 100 feet north from the South Gatehouse via a concrete stair is the Resting Pavilion. The Resting Pavilion incorporates the swept gables of the Main House into a shade-giving structure within the gardens. This open air structure is roughly six foot square, and the roof projects an additional three feet on each side. Set upon a concrete base, the wood framed pavilion is composed of twelve columns, three at each corner tied with collar beams holding up a large cusped gable roof open to the north and south. The Resting Pavilion has decorative brackets, exposed rafters and purlins, and a metal tile roof, ornamented with a ridge cap and acroterion. The pavilion is also decorated with stamped metal plaques. On the east and west sides of the pavilion are two wooden benches, and the south entrance has a swinging double half gate. Some original applied decorations have been removed.

#### 3. Japanese Pagoda

The Japanese Pagoda is the most distinctive ornamental structure on the hill. It is located southeast of the Main House near the Hotel pool. The pagoda was imported from Japan by the Bernheimer brothers and is over 600 years old, making it the oldest known structure in California. This traditional pagoda is similar in design and scale to *Tahoto* style pagodas, which were developed by the Japanese Tendai and Shingon sects of Buddhism during the Heian Period from 794-1185, when Chinese cultural influences were at their height. Pagodas were derivations of Indian stupas, which were used to house relics and images of the Buddha.

The Yamashiro pagoda rests on a rough masonry rock hill with a narrow passage running beneath it. It is on a concrete foundation which is raised off the ground and accessed by four miniature staircases with low railings. The pagoda is a "jeweled pagoda" or *hoto* pagoda consisting of three parts: a raised foundation (*kidan*), the main body (*toshin*), and a spire (*sorin*). The pagoda's spire is composed of six elements: *Hoju* (the Sacred Jewel), *Ryusha* (the Dragon Vehicle), *Suien* (the Water Flame), *Kurin* (the Nine Rings), *Fukubachi* (the Lotus Flower), and *Roban* (the Inverted Bowl). There are nine rings representing the Buddhist deities, and a water flame charm to protect the pagoda from fire. The pagoda has a copper pyramidal roof with elaborate flying eaves and cloud patterned brackets. The top story sits on a square platform decorated with a lotus-patterned cornice resting on the section below. A copper *mokoshi* or pent roof with flying eaves and decorative brackets is beneath the platform, over the ground floor structure which is also square in plan. Both floors are enclosed with carved wood panels that are decorated with brass fittings, stamped metal plaques, and carved wooden floral decorations at the corners.

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***Integrity***

Although there have been alterations to the property over time, in part to accommodate new uses, the Yamashiro Historic District retains all seven aspects of integrity:

Location: All contributors are in their original locations.

Design and Setting: The overall components of the design and setting – the Main House and Gardens, along with the contributing secondary structures, retain significant elements of their original design. The property retains the original site plan with the Main House at the top of the hill and the gardens below defined by terraces laid out in concentric circles.

Workmanship: There are significant character-defining features remaining on all contributing structures and the garden site which convey the workmanship of the original construction. Particularly noteworthy are the Asian eclectic elements of the Main House, Garage, Gardens, and Garden Structures.

Feeling: The Yamashiro Historic District retains the significant physical features that contribute to the original feeling of the property as an elaborate “castle on the hill.”

Association: The property still conveys the Asian eclectic aesthetic associated with the original owners and early hillside residential development in Hollywood. It has operated, and continues to operate, as a tourist destination and restaurant for much of its history.

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**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

Social History

**Period of Significance**

1914-1960

**Significant Dates**

1914; 1925; 1929; 1948; 1960

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Small, Franklin M. (architect)

Bernheimer, Adolph and Orum, Andreas C.

(landscape designers)

**Period of Significance (justification)**

The period of significance reflects the completion of the original construction of the Main House in 1914, through the opening of Yamashiro as a restaurant in 1960.

**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)**

N/A

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The Yamashiro Historic District is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A at the local level of significance as a rare example of early hillside development in Hollywood, and as an important social institution for the burgeoning entertainment industry. It is also significant for its association with the development of the tourism industry in Hollywood. The Yamashiro Historic District is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C at the local level of significance as an exceptional example of Asian eclectic architecture in Hollywood. It displays high artistic value and represents a significant example of American orientalism in architectural design, which filtered Chinese, Japanese, and other influences through a western lens to create unique and romanticized structures. The Main House, out buildings, and landscape features are unified by Japanese-inspired design details and display a high level of craftsmanship. The period of significance begins in 1914, when construction on the Main House was completed, through 1960, when the restaurant Yamashiro is opened on the site.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

### **Criterion A: Social History**

The Bernheimer brothers were the scions of the family cotton and cloth fortune. Their uncle, Adolph Bernheimer, developed the manufacture of printed and dyed fabric in the United States, which he later expanded into a large cloth exporting business.<sup>6</sup> The Bernheimer brothers were living in New York and originally intended Yamashiro as a winter home. They chose one of the most scenic hillsides in Hollywood, and soon decided to relocate full-time to Southern California. When they purchased the property, Hollywood had recently been consolidated with the city of Los Angeles. It was in the midst of transforming from a small agricultural center to a bustling suburb; the first movie studio was established in Hollywood in 1911, and wealthy patrons were starting to settle in the area. Yamashiro is significant as an early example of development in the Hollywood Hills. It immediately became an important landmark in the community, and the Bernheimers periodically opened the gardens to the public.

In the early 1920s the Bernheimers and the City were embroiled in an ongoing dispute over property to the north of the estate, upon which the City had constructed a large cistern. With the onset of World War I, the Bernheimers' German heritage had also become problematic, and the purchase of a \$5,000 war bond did little to assuage the uneasiness in the community.<sup>7</sup> As a result, when Eugene Bernheimer died in 1923, Adolph decided it was time to leave Hollywood.<sup>8</sup> Yamashiro and its contents were put up for auction, and Joseph Toplitsky was the winning bidder. Toplitsky was a prominent Los Angeles developer, responsible for the Biltmore Theater, Mason Opera House, and the Richfield Oil Building in downtown Los Angeles. Toplitsky's plans to develop the property did not come to fruition, and by 1925 he had decided to sell. The leading bidder was John Tait, a restaurateur with properties in San Francisco and Los Angeles, who had offered \$1.5 million for the estate and its contents. Tait planned to promote Yamashiro as a tourist attraction. When the negotiations with Tait fell through, Toplitsky sold the property to noted financier and socialite William Clark Crittendon for \$1 million.

Crittendon purchased Yamashiro in 1925 to house a new social club for members of the entertainment industry called the 400 Club.<sup>9</sup> The impetus for the club was rooted in the struggle of entertainers to be accepted by members of Hollywood's cultural elite. Hollywood residents were known to refer to the studios as "gypsy camps," and boarding houses put up signs stating "no dogs and no actors."<sup>10</sup> Even as the industry grew in stature and actors, producers, and directors gained substantial wealth and fame, they were still largely excluded from Hollywood's exclusive country clubs and neighborhoods. A small number of motion picture stars, including Cecil B. DeMille, Mary Pickford, and Douglas Fairbanks were able to achieve some social status. Pickfair, the estate of Pickford and Fairbanks, became an international social

<sup>6</sup> Sam Watters, *Houses of Los Angeles: Volume 1* (New York: Acanthus Press, 2007), 277.

<sup>7</sup> Gregory Paul Williams, *The Story of Hollywood* (Los Angeles: BL Press LLC, 2005), 90.

<sup>8</sup> In 1924 Adolph Bernheimer leased property in Pacific Palisades, and constructed a second estate with a Japanese garden to house his art collection. The Bernheimer Garden was open to the public and averaged approximately 5,000 visitors a week. When Adolph died in 1944 the contents of the house were sold at auction. It was demolished in the 1950s.

<sup>9</sup> "Filmdom's Elite Have a New Club," *Los Angeles Times*, October 4, 1925.

<sup>10</sup> Charles Lockwood, *Dream Palaces: Hollywood at Home* (New York: Viking Press, 1981), 34.

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destination, entertaining the likes of King Alfonso XIII of Spain, the King and Queen of Siam (Thailand), the Crown Prince Hirohito of Japan, and Lord and Lady Mountbatten. However, the majority of the film community was also excluded from high profile events at Pickfair. This status was underscored in the 1925 *Blue Book* -- the guide to acceptable Los Angeles society -- which did not include members of the motion picture industry among its ranks.

In order to combat the social stigma, in 1924 English immigrant, actor, and stage director Frank Elliott created the Sixty Club for the upper echelon of the entertainment industry. The Sixty Club was a supper club that met once a month in the ballroom of the Biltmore Hotel in downtown Los Angeles. The dinners were well publicized and gained nationwide attention from a public eager for a glimpse of Hollywood fashion and glamour. In 1925, as a result of the success of the Sixty Club, Elliott teamed with Crittendon to create the 400 Club in order to "...provide the motion picture industry with its own superior social background, to establish social leadership, to create a permanent central rendezvous for the best elements of motion-picture society."<sup>11</sup>

Members of the 400 Club consisted of motion picture players, directors, producers, and others who worked for the entertainment industry in supporting roles. The grand opening of the 400 Club was on October 11, 1925, and it was reported to be the "largest gathering of individual stars on one occasion" to be held in Hollywood for many years.<sup>12</sup> Guests were greeted by Japanese girls serving tea as a live band accompanied the "Charlestoning" taking place in the music room.<sup>13</sup> Newspaper gossip columnists included descriptions of the opulence of the former Bernheimer estate and its exotic treasures in their reports. Attendees at the opening included Rudolph Valentino and Pola Negri, Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle, Marion Davies, Harold Lloyd, Norma Shearer, Norma Tallmadge, and Charlie Chaplin. The club had 200 members within a few weeks of opening, including Lillian Gish, Ramon Navarro, and Bebe Daniels.<sup>14</sup>

Following the success of the opening party and income from initial memberships, Elliott immediately made plans for significant upgrades to the property. The total cost was estimated in excess of \$1.5 million, and included two new wings on the main house to accommodate a ballroom and theater, new private bungalows, a swimming pool, and stables.<sup>15</sup> These improvements were never executed, however, as the 400 Club was quickly supplanted by other social clubs. A clear social stratification within the motion picture industry itself led to the development of the more exclusive Mayfair and Embassy Clubs. While the 400 Club was intended for "all branches of the picture and allied interests,"<sup>16</sup> the new clubs were strictly for on-screen talent and the upper echelon of the motion picture industry. Mayfair Club founder Fred Niblo explained that "...we prefer our own company under conditions where we shall not be stared at by gaping tourists."<sup>17</sup> The opening of these new clubs, combined with the onset of the Great Depression, resulted in the closure of the 400 Club by 1929. Although it lasted only a few years, the 400 Club was significant in the development of early social institutions for the entertainment industry in Hollywood.

Following the closure of the 400 Club, Crittendon retained ownership of the property and it was heavily promoted as an attraction for the growing number of tourists visiting Hollywood.<sup>18</sup> The growth of the tourism industry in Hollywood during this period was a confluence of Southern California boosterism and the public's romance with Hollywood and the movies. In the 1920s local businessmen, including *Los Angeles Times* publisher Harry Chandler, made a significant investment in the promotion of Los Angeles as a year-round tourist destination. Their efforts were successful, resulting in 1.5 million visitors coming to Los Angeles each year.<sup>19</sup> This coincided with the "Golden Age" of the motion picture industry, when Hollywood as a place became inextricably linked with the glamour of the movies. Bus tours brought tourists to Hollywood in droves, and the itineraries included a visit to Yamashiro, where for twenty-five cents visitors could tour the extensive gardens and take photographs of the spectacular views. During this period Yamashiro was also frequently used as a film location. It was featured in the 1933 Frank Capra picture *The Bitter Tea of General Yen* starring Barbara Stanwyck and Nils Asther.

<sup>11</sup> Alma Whitaker, "Cinema Society on the Warpath," *Los Angeles Times*, November 8, 1925.

<sup>12</sup> "New Screen Club Holds Open House," *Los Angeles Times*, October 12, 1925.

<sup>13</sup> Grace Kingsley, "The Four Hundred Club," *Los Angeles Times*, November 1, 1925.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> "Hollywood's Four Hundred Club," *Photoplay*, February 1926, 38.

<sup>16</sup> "Filmdom's Elite Have a New Club."

<sup>17</sup> Whitaker, "Cinema Society."

<sup>18</sup> There are no records or articles about the sale of the property until 1948.

<sup>19</sup> Kevin Starr, *The Dream Endures: California Enters the 1940s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 265.

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Yamashiro remained a significant tourist attraction until the early 1940s, when anti-Japanese sentiment during World War II forced the closure of the site to the public. Immediately following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, rumors that Yamashiro was a signal tower for the Japanese resulted in threats of vandalism to the property. In order to deflect attention from the property, some decorative features were removed and placed into storage, and the carved wood features were painted to obscure their appearance. In 1945 Joseph Gross of the Riviera Airborne Military School leased the property, and it was used as a boarding school for several years.<sup>20</sup> During this period bedrooms were added to the second floor to accommodate the students.

In 1948, the estate was purchased by Thomas O. Glover for \$150,000.<sup>21</sup> Glover intended to demolish the house and gardens and re-develop the site. Those plans were abandoned as Glover discovered significant architectural features and details while preparing the property for demolition. As a result, he decided to retain the original buildings and landscaping and restore the property as a club with a restaurant and hotel. The Hollywood Hills Hotel complex was constructed in the early 1950s in a portion of the east garden. During the 1950s the club and restaurant remained private, but as it gained in popularity, Glover started opening more frequently to the public. In 1960 Yamashiro formally opened as a full service restaurant, and continues to operate as such today. It remains a significant local landmark and tourist destination.

### **Criterion C: Architecture**

Yamashiro is an excellent and prominent example of Asian eclectic architecture in Hollywood. This architectural eclecticism, also known as orientalism (with subsets of Chinoiserie and Japonisme), has a long tradition in European and American architecture. Chinese-inspired rooms are common in grand European palaces; prominent examples include Brighton Pavilion in Brighton, England; the Chinese Palace at Oranienbaum, Russia; the Chinese House in Drottingholm, Sweden; and the Wasserpalais in Pillnitz, near Dresden, Germany.

In the United States, Asian architectural forms were popularized in the late-nineteenth century at the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, the 1894 San Francisco Midwinter International Exposition, and in particular at the 1893 Chicago World's Columbian Exposition. The Ho-o-den (Phoenix Hall) in the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago was one of the most influential buildings of its time.<sup>22</sup> The Ho-o-den approximated an eleventh century Buddhist temple on the exterior; the interior included wall paintings by Japanese art students, and architectural elements such as coffered ceilings, hand-carved native hardwoods, and figured nail heads. Charles and Henry Greene are known to have visited the Ho-o-den on their way west, and Frank Lloyd Wright visited it over fifty times. In 1901, Gustav Stickley began publishing the *Craftsman* magazine in New York, and the principles of handcraft, connecting with nature, and the return to a simple life, which first took hold in the industrialized cities in the East, were embraced in the West. *The Craftsman* included more articles about Japan than almost any other nation.<sup>23</sup>

American orientalism drew on historic precedents but did not strive to be an authentic replication. This was particularly true in Hollywood, where elaborate movie sets influenced the architecture of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the element of fantasy was more important than a strict adherence to a specific architectural style. Yamashiro is a significant early example of this type of fantasy architecture, a trend that became increasingly popular in the 1920s and reached its apex with the construction of the grand movie palaces along Hollywood Boulevard. Among these, the most prominent uses of exotic architectural styles were those commissioned by Sid Grauman: The Egyptian Theater (1922), and The Chinese Theater (1927).

Yamashiro was an immediate sensation and received widespread media attention. George O'Dodd wrote in *The Architect and Engineer* that the villa succeeded in using sixteenth-century architectural details while sacrificing nothing in terms of modern conveniences.<sup>24</sup> The *Los Angeles Times* published several articles about the estate, marveling that "that there was nothing in native Japan that could surpass the marvelous beauty of the Bernheimer villa."<sup>25</sup> The article went on to proclaim that:

<sup>20</sup> "Noted Area Leased for School Use," *Los Angeles Times*, March 4, 1945.

<sup>21</sup> "Site of Hollywood Gems Eyed for Development," *Los Angeles Times*, July 6, 2007.

<sup>22</sup> Hannah Sigur, *The Influence of Japanese Art on Design* (Salt Lake City, UT: Gibbs Smith, 2008), 48.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>24</sup> George V. O'Dodd, "The Castle on the Hill," *The Architect and Engineer*, Vol. 73, June, 1923, 87, 93.

<sup>25</sup> "Palatial Home is Finished," *Los Angeles Times*, November 15, 1914.

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*Inspected from close range, the residence presents only the aspect of a structure in the rough; but from Hollywood Boulevard, the house with its circular terraces and white retaining walls, looms upon the view like a vision from the skies of the celestial kingdom itself...*

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**Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)**

**Hollywood**

The area that became Hollywood was originally part of two former Spanish land grants -- Rancho La Brea and Rancho Los Feliz. These two ranchos were strategically oriented along the Cahuenga Pass, a major transportation corridor to the north, and the growing city of Los Angeles to the south. The Cahuenga Pass encompassed part of the *Camino Real del Rey*, which was the principal coastal passageway and used continuously as a trail facilitating commerce, livestock transport, and travel since the earliest Spanish exploration. The fields and orchards of the nineteenth century increasingly gave way to speculative real estate development by the turn of the twentieth century. In 1900, the Cahuenga Valley Improvement Association was established to guide real estate development in the area, just as the first electric track down the length of Prospect Avenue (present day Hollywood Boulevard) was completed.<sup>26</sup>

In 1903, the City of Hollywood officially incorporated with a population of 700. In 1904, gas lines were laid, the streets were numbered, and a single track of the Los Angeles Pacific Railroad was placed perpendicular to the electric track already on Prospect Avenue.<sup>27</sup> As the area became increasingly developed, churches, clubs and schools were built in close proximity to the grand single-family residences that lined Hollywood Boulevard and other nearby streets. By 1909, like many of its neighboring communities, Hollywood had experienced immense growth. While its population in 1903 was a mere 700, by 1909 it had reached 4,000.<sup>28</sup> Though dwarfed by the neighboring city of Los Angeles with 100,000 inhabitants, the small City of Hollywood quickly began to experience water shortages, drainage issues, and sewage problems, and less than ten years later Hollywood began to reconsider its status as an independent city.<sup>29</sup> In February of 1910, Hollywood was consolidated with the City of Los Angeles to take advantage the City's established sewer system and a new water supply created by the opening of the Los Angeles Aqueduct.

Although now formally part of the City of Los Angeles, Hollywood continued to have its own identity which was tied directly to the growth of the motion picture industry. Between 1910 and 1912, movie attendance doubled to nearly 20 million and the industry emerged as a powerful economic force.<sup>30</sup> As the popularity of the medium increased in the nation, so, too, did the physical facilities related to the production of films in Hollywood. The first motion picture studio in Hollywood was the 1911 Nestor Studio on the northwest corner of Sunset Boulevard and Gower Street. Within three months, five other companies arrived in Hollywood. Five years after the annexation of Hollywood by the city of Los Angeles, the area was in the midst of a real estate boom.<sup>31</sup> By this time Hollywood was no longer a small independent city struggling to deal with infrastructural problems, but a thriving suburb with a rapidly growing population and the home of a significant national industry.

Hollywood reached its heyday in the 1920s, when a large number of movie studios, movie theaters, and shopping centers filled Hollywood and Sunset Boulevards between Vine Street and Highland Avenue. By 1926, the motion picture industry was the "United States' fifth largest...grossing \$1.5 billion a year and accounting for 90 percent of the world's films."<sup>32</sup> Density in Hollywood increased substantially following World War II. By the 1950s, entertainment industry-related properties began to spread out throughout the greater Los Angeles area, and the major industry in Hollywood shifted to tourism.

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<sup>26</sup> Gregory Paul Williams, *The Story of Hollywood: An Illustrated History* (Los Angeles: BL Press, 2005), 29.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>28</sup> Bruce Torrence, *Hollywood: The First One Hundred Years* (Hollywood: Hollywood Chamber of Commerce, 1979), 9.

<sup>29</sup> Williams, 52-53.

<sup>30</sup> Kevin Starr, *Inventing the Dream: California through the Progressive Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 309.

<sup>31</sup> Williams, 78.

<sup>32</sup> Kevin Starr, *Material Dreams: Southern California through the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 313.

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**Conclusion**

The Yamashiro Historic District contains significant and prominent examples of Asian eclectic architecture in Hollywood. It retains significant character-defining features and exhibits high quality of design, both architecturally and in the associated landscape features. Its prominent site overlooking Franklin Boulevard made Yamashiro an immediate landmark in the community. It has significant associations with the nascent entertainment and tourism industries in Hollywood, both of which played a prominent role in the area's development. In 2007 Yamashiro was designated Historic Cultural-Monument #921 by the City of Los Angeles.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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### Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

- "Borrowed from the Far East," *Los Angeles Times*, January 11, 1914.
- "Filmdom's Elite Have a New Club," *Los Angeles Times*, October 4, 1925.
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- "Site of Hollywood Gems Eyed for Development," *Los Angeles Times*, July 6, 2007.
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- \_\_\_\_\_. *Material Dreams: Southern California through the 1920s*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Dream Endures: California Enters the 1940s*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Torrence, Bruce. *Hollywood: The First One Hundred Years*. Hollywood: Hollywood Chamber of Commerce, 1979.
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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)  
 previously listed in the National Register  
 previously determined eligible by the National Register  
 designated a National Historic Landmark  
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other  
Name of repository: Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 7 acres  
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

2 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

4 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Assessor Parcel Number: 549017016  
Tract: TR 3237  
Map Reference: M B 37-21  
Block: None  
Lot: LT A  
Map Sheet: 150B181

The Yamashiro Historic District is located on an approximately triangular-shaped parcel in the neighborhood of Hollywood in Los Angeles, California. It is on a hill located one-quarter mile north of Franklin Avenue. The southern and eastern boundary is Sycamore Street, which curves around the hillside. The northern boundary is at the split of Sycamore Street and Fitch Drive. The western boundary is the one-way section of Fitch Drive.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary represents the historical boundaries of the property purchased by the Bernheimer brothers.

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Brian Curran; Christine Lazzaretto  
Organization Historic Resources Group, LLC Date April 20, 2012  
street & number 12 South Fair Oaks Avenue telephone 626-793-2400 x112  
city or town Pasadena State CA zip code 91105  
e-mail christine@historicla.com

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**Additional Documentation**

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

- Continuation sheets**
- Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- Attachments**
  - Attachment 1: Sketch Map
  - Attachment 2: Sanborn Map, 1919
  - Attachment 3: Parcel Map, 1993
  - Attachment 4: Historic Photographs
  - Attachment 5: Sketch Map with Photo Key
  - Attachment 6: Photo Log
- Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

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**Photographs:**

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Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

**Type and Number of Photographs:** 28 archival 5x7" black x white photographic prints

**Name of Property:** Yamashiro Historic District

**City or Vicinity:** Los Angeles

**County:** Los Angeles

**State:** California

**Photographer:** Brian Curran

**Date Photographed:** September 2010

**Description of Photograph(s) and number:** See Sketch Map with Photo Key (Attachment 5, page AD-15) and Photo Log (Attachment 6, page AD-16)

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**Property Owner:**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

Name Andre Ulloa, Yamashiro Hollywood  
street & number 1999 N. Sycamore Avenue telephone 323-466-5125  
city or town Los Angeles state CA zip code 90068

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

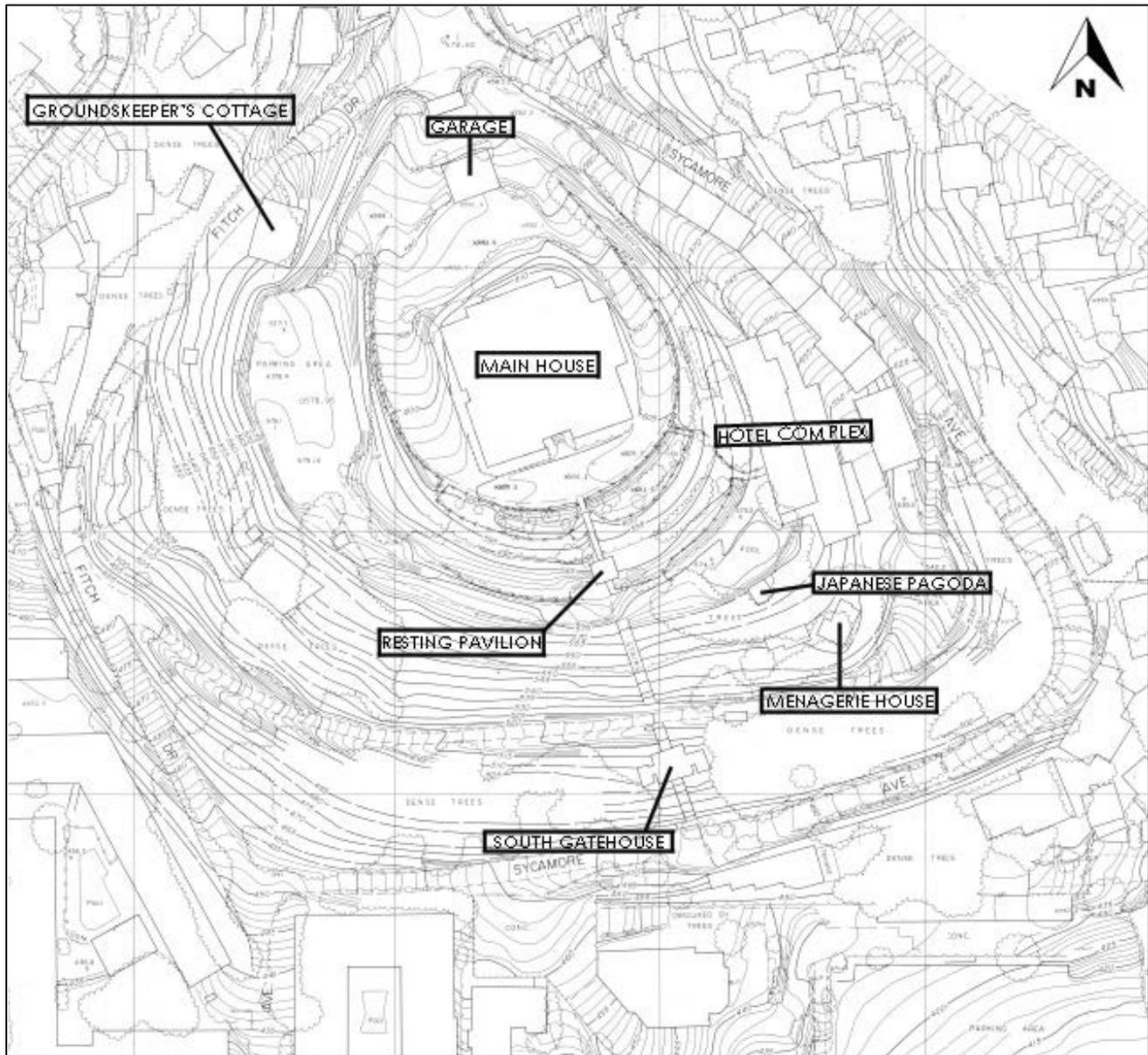
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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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## Attachment 1: Sketch Map



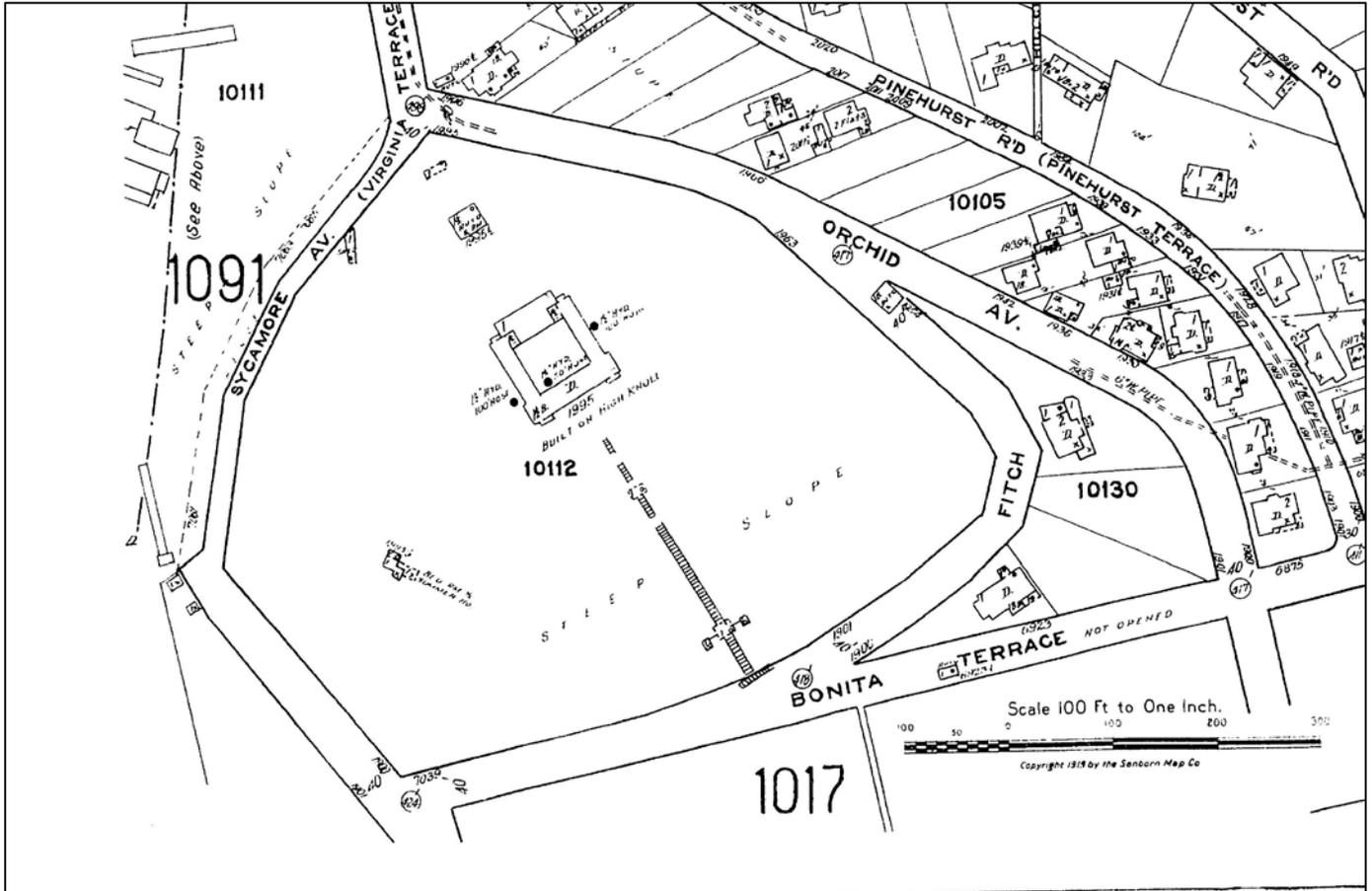
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## Attachment 2: Sanborn Map, 1919



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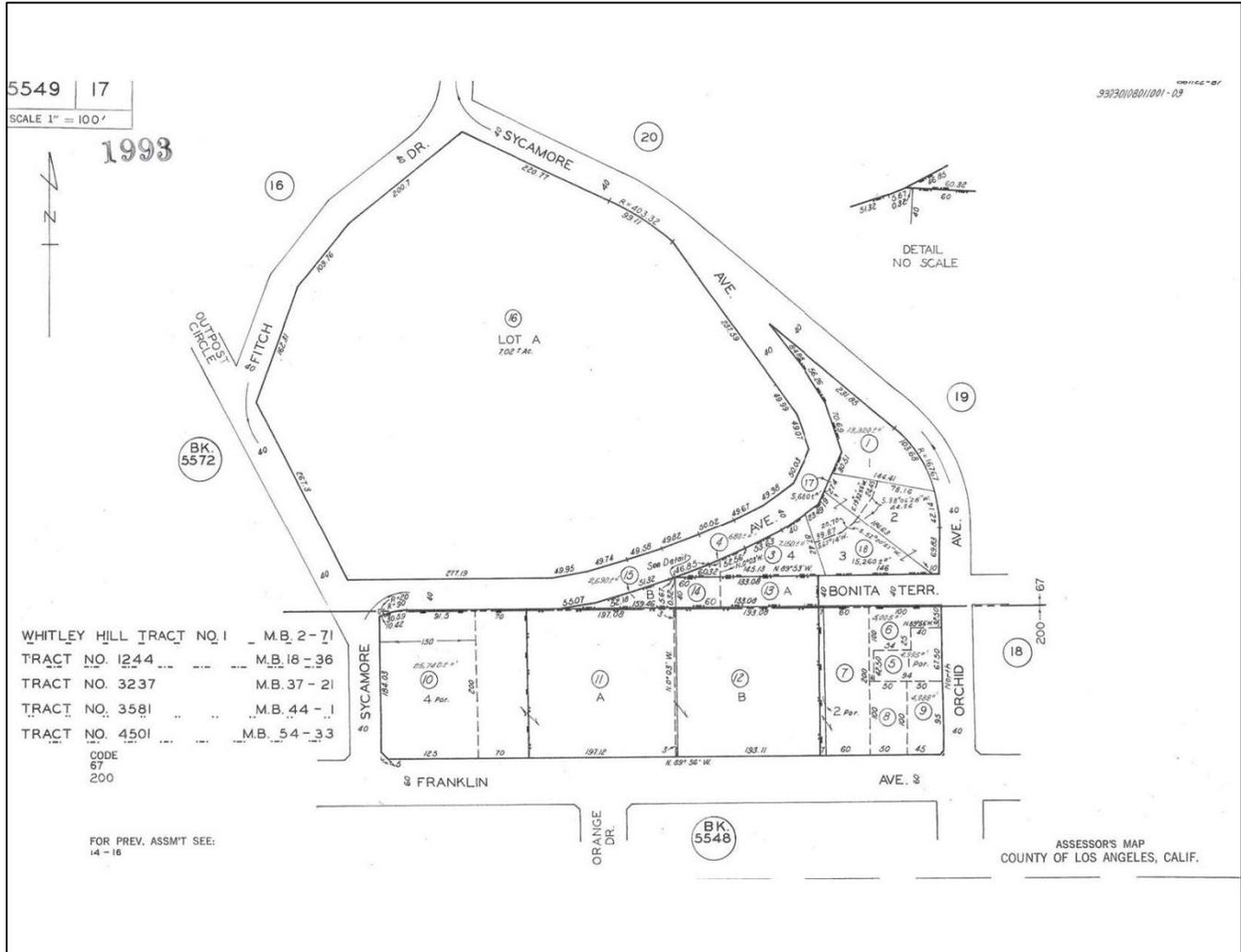
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## Attachment 3: Parcel Map, 1993



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## Attachment 4: Historic Photographs



Aerial view, 1924. Source: Los Angeles Public Library.

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National Park Service

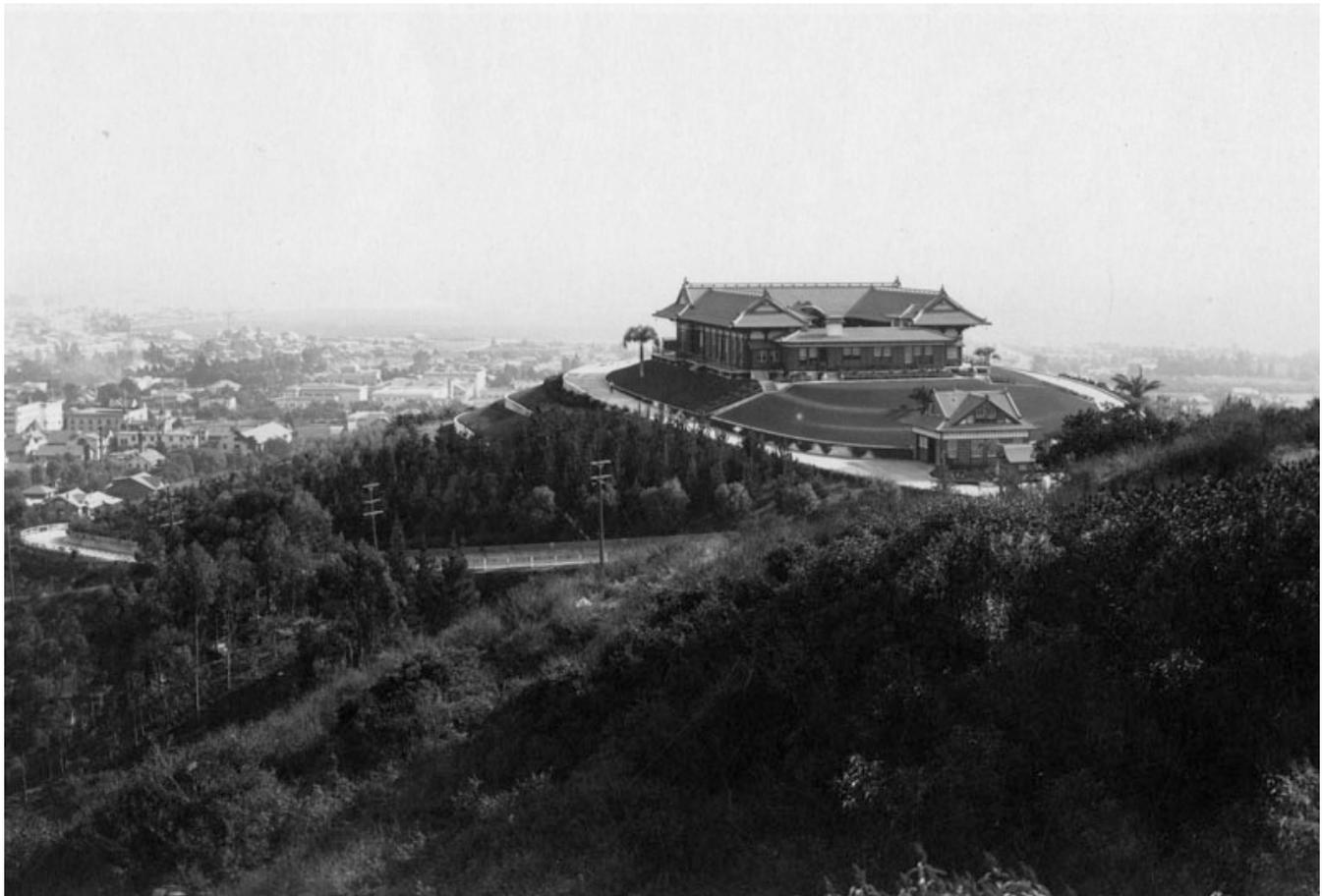
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## Attachment 4: Historic Photographs



View of Main House and Garage, looking south, no date. Source: Los Angeles Public Library.

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## Attachment 4: Historic Photographs



Main House, south façade, no date. Source: Los Angeles Public Library.

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## Attachment 4: Historic Photographs



Main House, south façade detail, 1914. Source: Los Angeles Public Library.

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## Attachment 4: Historic Photographs



Main House, south façade detail, no date. Source: Los Angeles Public Library.

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## Attachment 4: Historic Photographs



Main House, south façade, no date. Source: Los Angeles Public Library.

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## Attachment 4: Historic Photographs



Japanese Pagoda, 1926. Source: Los Angeles Public Library.

United States Department of the Interior  
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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number AD Page 11

### Attachment 4: Historic Photographs



Resting Pavilion, no date. Source: Los Angeles Public Library.

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National Park Service

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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## Attachment 4: Historic Photographs



View looking southwest, 1957. Source: Los Angeles Public Library.

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National Park Service

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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## Attachment 4: Historic Photographs



Garden detail with miniature village, no date. Source: Los Angeles Public Library.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number AD Page 14

## Attachment 4: Historic Photographs



Garden detail with original stairs and retaining walls, no date. Source: Los Angeles Public Library.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

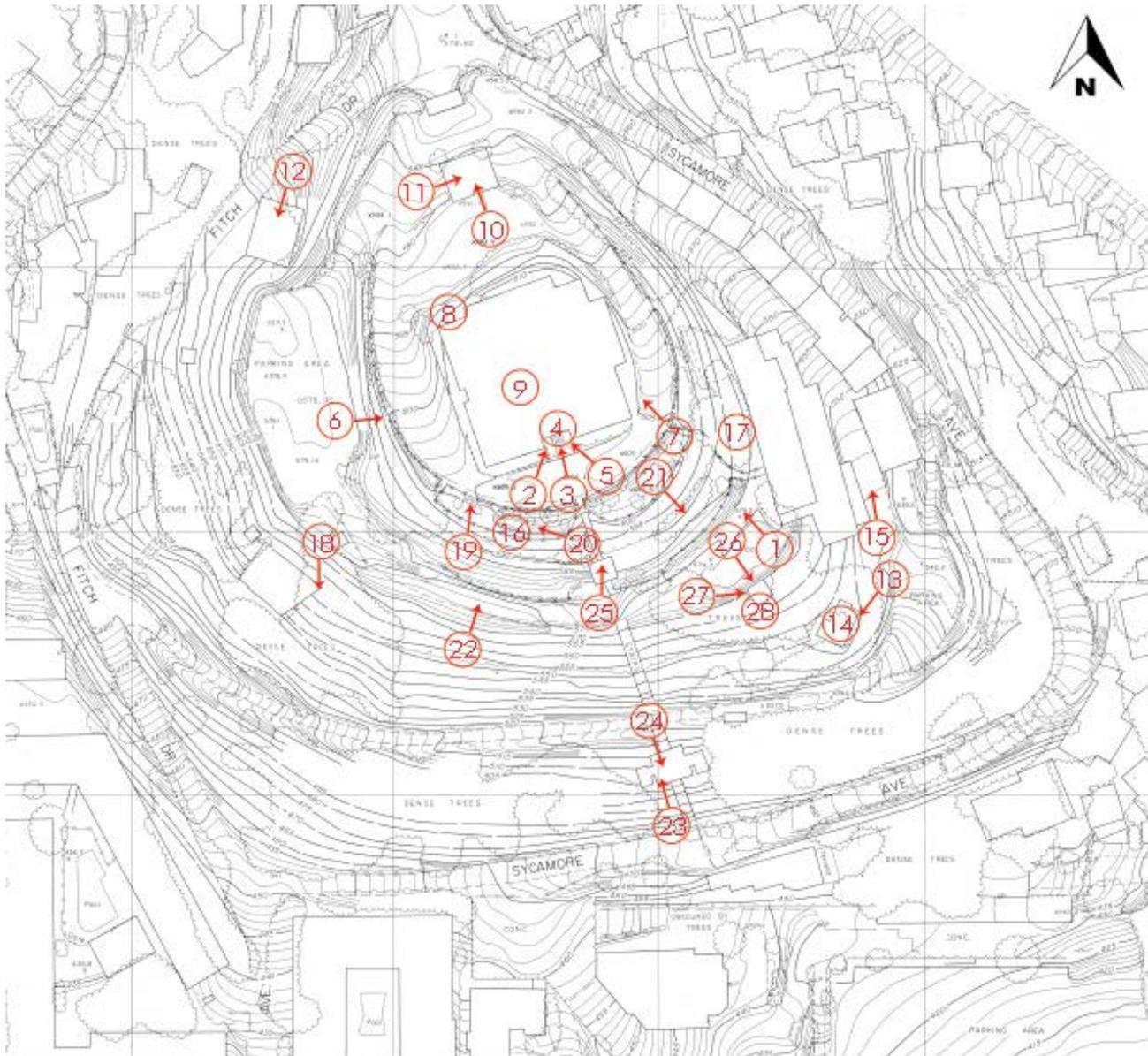
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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number AD Page 15

## Attachment 5: Photo Key



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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number AD Page 16

### Attachment 6: Photo Log

PHOTO #	DESCRIPTION/VIEW
0001	Main House. South façade, looking north from the Japanese Pagoda.
0002	Main House. Southwest façade detail, facing northwest.
0003	Main House. Detail of south (main) entrance, facing north.
0004	Main House. Detail of south (main) entrance, facing north.
0005	Main House. Southeast façade detail, facing northeast.
0006	Main House. West façade, facing east.
0007	Main House. East façade, facing northwest.
0008	Main House. Detail of north façade, northwest corner facing southeast.
0009	Main House. Courtyard, facing northeast.
0010	Garage. South façade, facing north.
0011	Garage. West façade, facing east.
0012	Groundskeeper's Cottage. North façade, facing south.
0013	Menagerie House. East façade, facing southwest.
0014	Menagerie House. Interior detail of rock chimney.
0015	Hotel Complex. View facing north.
0016	Garden detail. South of Main House, facing east.
0017	Garden detail. Southeast of Main House, facing west.
0018	Garden detail. Southwest of Main House, facing southeast.
0019	Garden detail. Southwest of Main House, facing east.
0020	Garden detail. South of Main House, facing west.
0021	Garden detail. South of Main House, facing south.
0022	Garden retaining wall detail. Southwest of Main House, facing east.
0023	South Gatehouse. South façade, facing north.
0024	South Gatehouse. North façade, facing south.
0025	Resting Pavilion. South façade, facing north.
0026	Japanese Pagoda. North façade, facing south.
0027	Japanese Pagoda. West façade, facing northeast.
0028	Japanese Pagoda. Grotto detail, facing east.